

Team Progress Report: Matador Momentum

Nearly three years ago--in late November 2015--we sent in our campus application to participate in "Re-imagining the First Year of College," an initiative directed by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

In December 2015 we learned that we had been selected as one of the 44 participating institutions nationwide, and in February 2016, the four Matador Momentum team leaders attended the kick-off conference in Austin, TX.

In July 2018, AASC&U marked the end of the national initiative, but with support from Dr. William Watkins, VP of Student Affairs, Matador Momentum has found a continuing CSUN home as part of the Student Graduation and Retention Committee.

Here's what we've accomplished Nov. 2017-Sep. 2018:

1. We provided initial drafts for CSUN's new letters to parents and family members of incoming freshmen and new transfer students. (The finished letters were sent out in August 2018.)
2. We designed and distributed student success wallet cards (and Life Savers) at all of the resource fair sessions for New Student Orientation (NSO) 2018. The wallet cards list key campus offices every student should know about. They encourage students to ask for help because "everyone needs a little help sometimes." The cards include a link to the much fuller list of campus resources on the Matadors Rising webpage. And when NSO ended, we distributed cards to most of the college deans, the Campus Store, Housing, IT, the office of the VP of Student Affairs, the Klotz Student Health Center, University Counseling Services, the University Student Union, Student Outreach & Recruitment, and the office of the President. Additional cards were shared with college Graduation & Retention Specialists for their fall 2018 Welcome Events. Additional cards were given out at the President's Welcome-Back Picnics (Sep. 6, 2018), along with 1000 Matadors Rising t-shirts. Unexpected bonus: in designing the cards, we lobbied successfully to get approval for a "vanity URL" so that students could find their advisors by typing in www.csun.edu/findadvisor instead of the unwieldy <https://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/academic-advisement>.
3. Working in partnership with the office of Marketing & Communications, we spearheaded the development of four brief videos that elaborate on the "four steps" that are part of the Matadors Rising posters and campaign (Connect, Plan, Explore, Graduate). The videos were completed on Aug. 24, 2018.

4. In partnership with CSUN's Portfolium team, we sponsored "Matador Moments: Freshman Challenge": <https://www.csun.edu/matadormoments>. The first round of winners was selected in spring 2018, and their works were screened at New Student Orientation for all new CSUN students (freshmen and transfers). The President screened a "best-of" montage as part of her Welcome Address on Aug. 23, 2018. The Matador Moments challenge will re-open in fall 2018 for the 2018-2019 academic year.
5. We distributed Scantrons, green books, pencils, high fives, and encouraging words as part of the Finals Giveaway events at the end of the fall 2017 and spring 2018 semesters. Students from the Office of Student Involvement & Development were key partners in both events. The CSUN Navigators provided significant help as well.
6. The four team leaders presented an overview of our work at AASC&U's Summer Academic Conference (Bellevue, WA, July 28, 2018).
7. Matador Momentum was nominated for CSUN's 2018 Jolene Koester Team Award as part of the 52nd Annual Staff Service and Recognition of Excellence, and we were listed in the program for the event as well.
8. The collection of resources designed to help faculty understand how and why they should be teaching students how to go to office hours found a permanent home at <https://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/academic-first-year-experiences/demystifying-office-hours-your-students>
9. Matador Momentum was represented on a plenary panel at the August 2018 Chairs and Deans Retreat.
10. We supported the expansion of NSO sessions for new transfer students.
11. We conducted two student focus groups (May 7 and 8, 2018) to help us monitor the effectiveness of our work publicizing Matadors Rising.

The focus groups identified five campaign elements that worked especially well for them:

- a. 15 to Finish
- b. We Can Do This
- c. The campaign went beyond a bare-bones "welcome" statement
- d. "Made it feel like the school does care if you finish"
- e. "At my community college we didn't have this. They let us stay 10 years."

They also identified the top challenges they were facing:

- a. Not knowing anybody
 - b. Roommates
 - c. Homesickness
 - d. Parking
 - e. Finding resources
12. With the help of the Office of Student Involvement and Development, we sent out a survey to over 5000 students who attended New Student Orientation in August 2017.

The survey results indicated that of the 527 students who responded,

- a. 23% were aware of the Matadors Rising t-shirt
- b. 19% were aware of the Matadors Rising string bags
- c. 16% remembered seeing the Matadors Rising video
- d. 15% had noticed the Matadors Rising banners on campus
- e. 13% had seen the Matadors Rising lawn signs and/or A-frames on campus

The same 527 students identified their primary outcome from Matadors Rising:

- a. 27% I feel like I can succeed at CSUN
- b. 23% I feel more proud to be a Matador
- c. 21% I feel like I belong at CSUN
- d. 17% I like wearing my Matador t-shirt
- e. 8% Discount on a beverage on campus.

Looking ahead: these projects have not yet been completed:

1. Long-range plans for Finals Giveaway events at the end of each semester.
2. The Campus Communications Makeover, an initiative to identify and disseminate best practices for student-facing websites and other messaging including automated email replies and phone greetings and recordings.
3. The final development and publication of our collection information about campus mentoring and peer programs (46 of them and counting). We hope to be able to share the information online in a searchable format to encourage participation by students in both roles (mentor/mentee, advisor/advisee, etc.).
4. Continue working to establish Faculty and Staff Success Champions
5. Establish a way to recognize student success stories through a new program, "Celebrations of Student Success."
6. Develop a quick-start guide for faculty: a companion piece to the student success wallet card (and website) highlighting campus resources every faculty member should know about, and how faculty can utilize them to support student success.
7. Engage more staff in Matador Momentum initiatives and activities.
8. Add more student members to the Matador Momentum team.
9. Monitor data on graduation rates to gauge the effectiveness of the Matadors Rising campaign materials.
10. Report our accomplishments and request a budget that provides us with money in advance of our needs.
11. Continue to support the CSUN Mentorship Program.
12. We need to decide how to disseminate the new Four Steps videos.
13. We need to re-fresh and re-design the Matadors Rising webpage:
<https://www.csun.edu/matadorsrising>

In review: here's what we accomplished in our first two years:

1. We chose a team name, "Matador Momentum," to represent our goal of fostering forward motion for our students through cross-divisional cooperation including student members.
2. We supported the revision of the campus's letters to students on probation to emphasize "next steps" instead of "you are in big trouble."
3. We supported the parallel revision of the letters informing students that they had not achieved Satisfactory Academic Progress so that they also focus on next steps.
4. We launched a Communications Makeover initiative (still under way) to disseminate best practices for student-facing websites and other messaging including automated email replies and phone greetings and recordings.
5. We supported the reset of the Satisfactory Academic Progress threshold (to bring it in line with others in the Cal State system)
6. In partnership with the Advising Resource Center and Undergraduate Studies, we renamed the "undecided/undeclared" major as "exploratory" to acknowledge the role played by student agency and activity in that major and to remove the stigma attached to being an "un-" major.
7. We persuaded the campus to create a student portal pagelet providing one-stop information about all on-campus jobs. (Previously they had been posted on six separate campus websites, none of which referred to any of the others.)
8. In partnership with the office of Marketing & Communications, we launched a student success campaign, Matadors Rising. In addition to banners, signs, buttons, postcards, emails, pens, and other items promoting students success, the campaign includes the Matadors Rising website (<https://www.csun.edu/matadorsrising>) with these elements:
 - a. An opening message from the campus president.
 - b. A short video (2:40) highlighting the campaign themes around Matadors Rising and student success: "We can do this," "Finish with 15," and "Think 30." This video was shown as part of all New Student Orientation sessions in late summer 2017.
 - c. A "How can we help?" Web form allows students to request information or assistance.
 - d. The "Campus Essentials" list links to key campus offices, programs, and service providers.
 - e. A collection of "Celebrations of Student Success" offers brief profiles of recent CSUN graduates.
 - f. "Save more," "Earn more," "Do more" data points emphasize the benefits of a college degree.
9. We have provided ongoing support to the campus's GI 2025 initiative, which took on the name "Matadors Rising."

10. We developed the idea of “data champions,” members of the faculty supported with funds to examine and share student success data to guide curricular and classroom changes with their colleagues.
11. To forward our goals, we launched a series of faculty/staff workshops:
 - a. Teaching faculty to teach students how to “do” office hours—and explaining why students don’t already know how. See <https://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/academic-first-year-experiences/demystifying-office-hours-your-students>
 - b. Applying Dr. David Yeager’s “psychological friction” model at CSUN by customizing his powerful graphic to the challenges our students encounter.
12. We shared a suggestion that resulted in “MataCare” emergency grants for students with unexpected urgent financial needs: <https://www.csun.edu/financialaid/matacare-emergency-grant>
13. In partnership with Academic Technology, we helped develop “Matador Moments: Freshman Challenge,” an online competition inviting all current CSUN students to share their success stories about challenges they addressed during their freshman year.
14. We advocated successfully for the expansion of two existing programs:
 - a. ExCEL: Experience Confidence & Enjoyment in Learning.
 - b. RAISE Your GPA: a two-unit course offered to students who need to improve their GPA.
15. We suggested that the registration dates for continuing freshmen shift to permit them to register during their spring (second semester), allowing them to build on their ongoing momentum and potentially register for classes with current classmates. (This suggestion will be implemented in spring 2018.)
16. We partnered with the Office of Student Success Innovations to develop messages for a series of laminated placards displayed by faculty and staff (and duplicated in digital form as part of email signatures) for the “CSUN Connects” campaign.
17. We established the CSUN Mentorship Program in the Office of Student Involvement and Development. By November 2017, 1100 (of 5000+) new freshmen signed up to indicate their interest in the program and have been sent an email newsletter each month with important deadlines, an invitation to participate in a designated campus event, the profile of a selected campus resource, and (for a subset of the 1100) peer mentoring, with one-on-one mentoring available on request.
18. We supported the expansion of New Student Orientation for new transfer students from one session each summer to three separate dates, thus allowing the program to triple in size.
19. We participated in the New Student Orientation Resource Fair (multiple dates in August 2017).
20. We collected data about campus mentoring and peer programs (46 of them and counting). We hope to be able to share the information online in a searchable database to encourage participation by students in both roles (mentor/mentee, advisor/advisee, etc.).

21. Team members presented two sessions at the July 2017 Academic Affairs Summer Meeting of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities in Baltimore, MD: “Belonging Intervention for Faculty and Staff: Changing Hearts and Minds” and “Student Affairs and Academic Affairs Partnership: What the Student Affairs Side of the House Wishes You Knew.”
22. We suggested that the Terry Piper Lecture Committee bring Dr. David Yeager to campus as their 2017 keynote speaker. They did: <https://www.csun.edu/studentaffairs/previous-speakers#yeager>.